

MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Training for Golf



Start Strong Finish Strong

Dr. Rob Bell

What is Mental Toughness

Hardiness

“It is our duty as human beings to proceed as though the limits of our capabilities do not exist”- T. de Chardin

Mental toughness can be summed up in two components:

- Coping with struggle
- Performing well under pressure

In order for us to be mentally tough and perform our best, we must develop a hardy personality through our practice regimens. We must establish practices that allow us to experience both 1) coping with struggle and 2) performing well under pressure.

Developing a Human Tap Root

-The view better be spectacular-

The dandelion is an interesting plant. It appears to be revered by young children because it is plentiful and is one flower that can be played with instead of just admired like most. At the same time, it is hated by most homeowners as just an annoying weed. Regardless of one's attitude toward the dandelion, it is a very hardy plant. It sprouts very quickly in most types of soil, in any climate, with little or lots of rainfall; it also does not seem to need the approval of its owner to grow successfully.

The hardiness personality is akin to the hardiness factor in plants which is a plants ability to survive in adverse growing conditions. The measurement of plant's hardiness includes its ability to withstand *drought, wind, cold, and heat*. The process of gardeners developing strains of beautiful plants and shrubs involves the process of “hardening.” Ironically, the hardiest types of plants (i.e., weeds/dandelions) are usually the most undesirable to the typical homeowners.

The common trait among all hardy plants however is the tap root. The tap root looks similar to a carrot or turnip and grows vertically down as opposed to branching off horizontally. The presence of a taproot is similar to a major artery in the human body, it distributes water where needed and it makes the plant very difficult to displace because it will continue to re-sprout. Thus, developing a hardiness personality begins with developing a human tap root.

The human tap root however does not occur through physiological or mechanical changes. A human tap root is a metaphor of mental toughness because it is an attitude and an overall mentality. The analogy of a taproot is effective because similar to mental toughness, it is unseen. Honestly, when looking at a tree or plant, we only focus on the branches and leaves. Unless we are a botanist, we pay little attention to what we can't see, which is the taproot.

Coaches and commentators often label the human tap-root as “the intangibles.” These unseen qualities are often immeasurable, yet the intangibles and the strength of the human taproot determine the success of each particular player. Similar to golfers, most are only interested in what can be observed (e.g., how far they can hit the ball, putting stroke, and overall swing) yet it is only a small piece of what differentiates good and great players. Just as the strength of the taproot is what will ultimately determine the longevity of the tree. The real difference of success lies in the unseen---the intangibles, one's mental toughness. If the roots are not strong, then the tree and player will eventually submit to the conditions. In order to grow the human taproot, we must enhance and develop the four C's:

- Commitment
- Challenge
- Control

- Confidence

Commitment

"Nothing is really work unless you would rather be doing something else"-James M. Barrie

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has been guarded 24 hours a day, 7 days a week since 1930. Guarding the tomb is considered an elite honor, yet only a few are able and can endure the stringent requirements. First, guards commit two years of service and must live in a barracks underneath the tomb. For the first six months of service, they cannot speak to anyone and spend off-duty time learning the 175 notable members buried in Arlington National Cemetery. They march in specific twenty-one step arrangements and change guards every thirty minutes for twenty-four hours a day. Guards must dress themselves in front of a full-length mirror and often spend five hours cleaning and preparing their uniform. Guards cannot drink alcohol nor swear in public for the rest of their lives. After two years of duty, each guard is presented with a wreath pin and must obey certain criteria for the rest of their lives or surrender the pin. Presently, there are approximately 400 wearers.

The Western States Endurance run is a 100-mile ultra-run and one of oldest and most challenging trail running events. It is a trek from Squaw Valley to Auburn, California consisting of rugged conditions and varying mountain ascents and descents accessible only by foot, horseback, or helicopter. The race begins at 5:00 AM and all finishers must complete the journey by 11:00 AM the following day, so most of the running is completed at night. Altogether, physical, mental, physiological, and environmental hazards exist and are encountered during this race. Even though runners must prove their worthiness and submit past race results to qualify,

only approximately 60% finish the race each year. Lastly, the reward provided to all finishers is a belt-buckle (Soderlund).

The Texas Water Safari is a 260 mile canoe race. It's moniker of the "world's toughest canoe race" seems appropriate since the boaters race non-stop for 36 hours or more and the goal is to never let the boat stop. Participants battle extreme heat, head winds, sleep deprivation, alligators, sharks, water moccasins, and/or copperheads. Canoeists have often reported hallucinations due to the extreme race as well. Those who finish the grueling trek receive a t-shirt and a meal at the end (texaswatersafari.org).

The self-transcendence race is a 3,100 mile run. Runners begin each day at 6 A.M. and can run until midnight, and are supported by friends and handlers supplying food and supplies during each day. The race is not completed across stretches of land; participants must circumnavigate a .5 mile course around a building 5,649 times! The latest winner completed the journey in 46 days and 6 hours. One runner, Suprabha Beckjord has completed the race eight times for a total of 24,801.37 miles. Beckjord stated "most people, if they are not into ultra-distance, they think... [it is] not even possible." The prize at the end of this arduous journey is a trophy and a photo album. No prize money is awarded (Orton, 2004).

The Kaihigyō are spiritual athletes from the Tendai Sect of Buddhism. They are better known as the marathon monks of Mt. Hiei. Their quest consists of a mere 1,000 day challenge which takes more than seven years to complete. The running is completed in increments of 100 days, thus monks run a marathon every day up to six months at a time. After the first five years, the running becomes serious; during the last two years, the monks complete two marathons a day for 100 consecutive days. Since 1885, only 46 monks have completed the challenge. The

conditions are quite severe as well; they begin running at midnight and trek through mountain passes and they run in straw sandals (80 pairs per hundred days), white robes, and live on a diet of vegetables, tofu and miso soup. The pilgrimage is so serious and sacred, that if they fail to finish, then they must hang or disembowel themselves. At the end of the journey, many citizens arrive hoping to be blessed by the monk completing the journey, but other than that from an outsider's perspective, the finish is rather anti-climatic. At the end of the journey, the monks are declared a "Saintly Master of the Highest Practice" (Schmid, 1996).

These examples have a few common traits, namely the dedication and mental challenges of completing such tasks. However, the main ingredient amongst these events is the underlying motivation. We can ascertain from the meager or lack of any real reward offered for these events that these dedicated individuals were not driven by external factors. Participants were not motivated by money, scholarships, or contracts. In order to achieve these incredible feats, the motivation must have come from within. Once each of these people committed to the goal, their commitment was then challenged every day as they made the choice to train and “push” throughout training. The vast majority of these individuals did not wake up the morning of the journey and decide just to “do it.”

Practice: The Question

Why do I practice & why do I play?

Assess your motivation by asking two questions: *why do I practice and why do I play?* We must be able to honestly assess our level of commitment and it must be asked of ourselves during appropriate times. Making the turn having bogeyed the last few holes is not the time to ask of ourselves “why am I out here?” During tough practices is again not the time to self-reflect

with rhetorical questions about our inner drive. For, if we can answer the “why” to the above questions, then we can come up with the “how.”

On tour, I repeatedly ask golfers their favorite aspect of playing. The most common answer is the “competition.” I agree! Pitting oneself against another is truly a great feeling. However, competition is merely an assessment of how well we measure up. Along with the aforementioned ultra-marathons, tests of will, and dedicated professions, the competition ultimately is against oneself. We should want to test ourselves under pressure and see if we have what it takes to be successful. Let’s say you have worked on the range with your swing coach on developing a draw. The competition against oneself becomes evident when we attempt it in competition and “need” to pull it off.

Why do I practice and why do I play?

Foremost is that it must be fun. If it is not fun, then there really is no point to trying to improve your play. However, within any chosen endeavor, there often becomes a love/hate relationship. We love to win and play well, but at the same time, we hate to lose and play poorly. A successful executive once told me that he can practice and play to a three handicap or he can never practice, try to have fun, and play at a ten index. We have to ask the question because it is our journey and choice to devote to training and improving our game.

Similar to any type of endeavor there are two options, we train and try to do our best or we can train very minimally and just be a “participant.” To be content with the participant mindset is similar to the “love to win” mentality. Who doesn’t love to win? However, it seems to take more than a “love to win” mentality, through my work; I have noticed that the real motivation of champions results from a standpoint of “hating to lose.” These players want to

prepare and know that they are ready to play as opposed to just hoping that they are ready. In return, they refuse to leave any stone unturned in their quest for greatness. For example, Jimmy Connors once stated "I hate to lose more than I love to win."

There is a solution of balancing the love/hate relationship and to help answer the question of why we play and practice. It results from who we are competing against. Competition in golf and life is a process against oneself. We should devote our time to see how good we can become. While there may be various goals, or results that we desire, the focus should be on the actual process of execution both physically and mentally. If the process is executed properly, then eventually results will take care of themselves. Oftentimes, we can get caught up with thinking about perfecting the swing, or driving the ball further. Yet, when the focus becomes solely result oriented like beating an opponent or outdriving a player, then we must return to the questions: *why do I practice and why do I play?* On the other hand, if we set a goal of winning a tournament, although it involves results, it can set us on a course for working on ourselves and our game to achieve this goal. We can then answer the question more easily.

Often on hikes in the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee, my wife and I attempted to lose ourselves to the sights, sounds, and experience of the hike. Without fail though on the way down sets of people asked "how much further to the top?" Our collegial response always seems to be "not much further," regardless of how far down the mountain we were. One time, near the mouth of the trail, a group of people asked us "is the view worth it?" Before we could respond, one of the men demanded "well, it better be spectacular." The point of the story is that no one can guarantee success, nor can anyone but you make the decision that pursuing your goals will be

spectacular. These are again outcome measures of success and in order to become and stay motivated we must focus on the process of improving and challenging ourselves.

Why are they champions?

-You can't push a rope-

How could a person who was seventh on the depth chart as quarterback in college, drafted in the sixth round at #199 overall become one of the best quarterbacks in his era? Before beginning any type of preparation/training, it is you that must make certain that they are committed. The best competitors reach deeper and prepare themselves better than everyone else. Tom Brady became one of the best because of his ability to recognize his weaknesses and distractions and refuse to leave “any stone unturned.”

Commitment is not a “sometimes” thing, nor is it one huge event. It is a lot of small decisions, commitments, and matches. Committing to goals must be constantly revisited throughout training. The first step of mental toughness training is motivation and ultimately motivation must come from within. It is YOU that must choose to face the hours of dedication.

Practice: Commitment

A few questions to assess your current motivation, remember “*in order to achieve something great, something must be given up.*”

1. *What are your individual goals for the season?*
2. *What is your strategy to achieve these goals?*
3. *Who will you share these goals with? Who will hold you accountable?*

4. *What are you willing to sacrifice in order to achieve this goal?*

Mental Toughness

Endure Suffering

-Inside every misfortune is fortune-

Victor Frankl, in the exceptional book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, discusses how we find meaning in our lives. Victor Frankl was a prisoner of war in three different concentration camps during WWII. To summarize the story, he developed the notion that we find meaning in three ways 1) *doing a deed*, 2) *experiencing a value*, and 3) *suffering*. Illustrating the final point, his wife died in the camps and his manuscript (a lifetime of work) was discovered years into his containment and destroyed...he had to recreate his experiences and write it only on stolen pieces of paper.

What do the football players of Ray Everett, Dennis Byrd, Mike Utley, and Jim MacLaren all have in common? Each was at the peak of their careers (Jim MacLaren as the best one-legged triathlete) and suffered a quadriplegia accident. All have stated that they would not have changed the incident and it was the best thing to happen. More so, most able-bodied people would pay more to remain able-bodied than disabled people would to become able-bodied once again (Sackett, & Torrance 1978).

Whereas, the above heroes did suffer, they experienced firsthand whereas most of us can only imagine what it would be like. Those not in the current dire situations overestimate how long they would suffer and feel awful from a possible dramatic event (Gilbert, 2005). Alas, these difficult events for the aforementioned football players were merely moments in time and after a period; their resiliency was able to come to the fore. The truth is that negative events and suffering affect us, but not as bad as we think (Gilbert, 2005) and although most argue that suffering is not needed, enduring suffering is necessary.

In an attempt to improve, progress, and properly reflect, we must suffer. I hope the readers aren't thinking I wish harm to anyone or feel we need paralysis to grow. However, the reality of life, sport, and golf, is that suffering happens. It is unfortunate that bad events happen and the longer we live, the more poor experiences we will encounter. The issue is that we shouldn't fear the loss or suffering to occur. Similar to able-body people, we mustn't overestimate events importance or significance because we then become mentally handicapped by the fear of the event. 2005 ESPY Arthur Ashe award winner Jim Maclaren states "fear is a good thing; it means something good can happen."

Why do athletes cry during losses or even victories? They realize how much suffering has occurred for them prior and are often overwhelmed at the emotion of the moment. If we are to experience these feelings of elation, we must endure feelings of inadequacy or loss; we must endure suffering. In the book: *In a pit with a lion on a snowy day*, author Mark Batteson summarizes the concept of suffering within the concept of faith; "sickness helps us appreciate health, failure helps us appreciate success, debt makes us appreciate wealth, It is the bad days that make us really appreciate the good ones"(Batteson, 2006 p. 71).

Practice: Endure Suffering

One avenue is to welcome and foster an environment in practice that enables suffering. Think how many golfers at the beginning of each season want to win a tournament or championship? Yet, most players only want it at their convenience and are not willing to suffer to achieve it. Thus, practices must be created with goals that are difficult to achieve and create feelings of frustration and fatigue. These moments will not only be encountered on the course, but these moments of suffering will help create who we are. Life and golf is difficult and it

requires patience and dedication to reach one's goals. So, never give up! You may be tired, not performing well, and thoughts of quitting may enter, but these are the critical moments of enduring suffering that need to be overcome. A few examples of athletes and historical figures who endured suffering:

- **Dan O'Brien (the favorite to win the Decathlon gold medal at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics) missed all attempts on the pole vault at the Olympic trials and went from first to last. He stated "It was like a bad dream." His comeback culminated with winning the 1996 Gold medal.**
- **Tim Mack (missed qualifying for the 2000 Olympics in the pole vault). He was ranked #10 in the world, qualified in 2004 at Olympic Trials, and won the Gold Medal in Athens.**
- **Park Tae Hwan of Korea was 14 years old and was disqualified for an illegal start at the 2004 Olympic Games in the 400 freestyle. He was so distraught; he stayed in a bathroom for hours. In 2008 at the Beijing Olympics, he won the Gold in the 400 Freestyle.**
- **Hayley McGregory (finished third at the 2004 and 2008 US Olympic trials four separate times; only the top two finishers advance to the Olympics). She did not advance to the Olympics despite setting the world record in the 100-back stroke (It was broken the next race).**
- **General George Washington lost his first battle in Pennsylvania.**
- **Silken Laumann was the favorite to win 1992 Gold Medal in the single scull. 10 weeks prior to the games, another rowing scull cut across her, broke her leg and shredded her muscles. Within ten days, she had five operations and was rowing just 27 days after the accident. Not only did she row, she ended up winning Bronze for Canada.**
- **Arguably the greatest shortstop of all time, the Ironman, Cal Ripken, holds the distinction of hitting into the most career double plays.**
- **Cy Young holds the all-time record for wins (over 500) yet also holds the all-time record for loses (over 300).**

- **Abebe Bikila won the 1960 Olympic marathon while running barefoot. He became the first Black African to win the 26.2 Olympic race. When asked why he ran barefoot "I wanted the world to know that my country, Ethiopia, has always won with determination and heroism."**
- **During the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, Shun Fujimoto, a Japanese gymnast, broke his knee during the floor exercise, but did not let on, knowing it could hurt his teammates confidence. He recorded a 9.7 on the rings after an 8-foot dismount, his best score ever; to help Japan win the team Gold.**
- **Arnold Palmer, "the king" had a seven-shot lead at the 1966 U.S. Open with nine-holes to play. He ended up losing in a playoff to Billy Casper.**
- **Johnny Unitas' first pass was intercepted and returned for a TD.**
- **Mark Zupan was a college soccer player and was in a car accident one night while riding in the back-seat. He broke his neck and clung to a tree branch in chilly canal water for fourteen hours before being rescued. He thrived as a paralympic champion and starred in the epic documentary, *Mudeball*.**
- **Jim Maclaren was a college football player at Yale University. One night while riding his motorcycle in NYC, a bus struck his wheel and he was pronounced DOA (Dead on arrival). Ultimately, all he lost was his leg and he transformed himself to become a champion in Triathlons. In a race on a closed course, a van struck his bike and rendered him a quadriplegic. Due to his rehabilitation and immense pain, he developed an addiction to cocaine. He reformed himself once again and is a speaker and founder of the *choose life foundation*.**

Not all stories are story-book caliber that accompanies a "happy ever after ending." Yet, the truth remains that suffering occurs at some point, so we must orchestrate a practice environment that fosters suffering.

Ed Moses was a Gold medalist in the 4 x 100 medley relay in the breaststroke at the 2000 Sydney games. His training regimen welcomed suffering through his practice. He has been playing professional golf since retiring from the pool and attempting to make it through Q-school. While swimming at the University of Virginia, he swam a practice that epitomizes building mental toughness. He awoke and swam his 6:00 am workout covering 8000 meters in

the morning session; came home, ate, slept, and awoke for his 10:00 am session. He spread out this practice through the entire day by repeating the process four times and covering 32,000 meters. Of comparison to other “elite” level swimmers, Michael Phelps averages 50,000 meters during an entire week.

The Navy SEALS (Sea, Air, & Land) unit is the most elite level of special operation units in the Navy and perhaps the entire US Armed Forces. Richard Machowicz, at 6 feet tall and 155 lbs was an unlikely candidate to become a Navy SEAL, and Special Ops sniper. In order to become a SEAL, each individual must endure Hell Week of BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training). Since only 7% of people qualified to become a NAVY SEAL actually make it, “Mack’s” chances were not good. He trained in unusual methods to build mental toughness for BUD/S. He literally would take ice cold showers to help him acclimate and control the negative voice in his head that would potentially ask him to quit. During his training he developed his mental toughness mantra of “I can only be defeated if I give up or die” (Machowicz, p. 7).

Swimming the English Channel is perhaps one of the most difficult endeavors that the human body can endure and the reason only 10% of people who attempt this feat actually make it. It is 19 nautical miles of swimming or 38000 meters. Water temperatures are between 59’ and 65’, and hypothermia is always an issue due to the 10-20 hours of open water exposure. In addition, swimmers must avoid open sea rubbish and have a support team to help feed appropriately. Due to the difficult task, and to provide credit to solo crossers, swimmers often team together and take turns swimming (no easy task as well). Marcia Cleveland successfully swam the English Channel and discussed her mental toughness training in her book *Dover Solo*. Her advice was “Acclimate! Swim enough yardage, swim in the dark, swim in all the rough and

cold (55 degree) water you can find, try out different feeds in salt water, and when you feel like not finishing, think of all the people who have supported your dream and tell yourself, 'Yes I can.'" (www.usms.org)

"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts."

Romans (Chapter 5, Verse 3)

The Don'ts of Mental Toughness

Expect to win every tournament

-A bad dress rehearsal foretells a good opening night-

Brendan Steele, a player on the Nationwide Tour, currently has conditional status, meaning that the number of PGA tournaments he can enter is directly influenced by how well he plays (obviously more pressure than one with full status). During one tournament at the Prince Georges Open in Maryland, he was low on the list of alternates and was not likely to get into the tournament. So, he flew back home to California on Tuesday to be with his wife and upon getting off the plane, discovered he was now entered in the tourney. He returned on a red-eye flight and arrived back in Maryland on Thursday morning for his early afternoon tee time. He had to play the course at the highest level, without having seen it, with no sleep, and with a local caddy on her very first assignment.

Fortunately, he was able to play well enough to make the cut and actually finished Sunday with one of the only bogey free rounds. But, the larger story is how he was able to accomplish this feat. He remarked that he was not able to “look ahead” to certain holes, and he only focused on “playing golf.” He was focused on the task at hand because there were no expectations.

The power of having no expectations has been illustrated by other professionals. A similar experience occurred with Alex Cejka at the Zurich Classic in New Orleans. Alex thought he missed the cut and flew back to Las Vegas, but bad weather eliminated the cut line and he flew to Houston and drove through the night to the tourney. He arrived an hour before his tee-time, but his clubs and clothes did not arrive!!! He played the final round with borrowed clubs and surprisingly played his best round of the week at 1-under par. Another example of playing with no expectations was Scott Dunlap at the 2000 PGA Championship. He shot an opening

round 66, despite coming off a bad cold and not playing for a month (New York Times, August 18, 2000).

In 2002 at the Tampa Bay Classic, K.J. Choi had been suffering with terrible stomach pains. He could be seen grabbing his abdomen often during the final round. He later stated that the pain made him say to himself, "I'll just take it hole by hole." He won the tournament by an amazing seven shots and had his appendix removed the next day (Eliot, 2004).

The University of Virginia men's golf team was in 16th place during the 2008 Regionals in which only the top ten teams advance to the NCAA championships. When UVA arrived in Chattanooga that morning, there was a long fog delay, which allowed Coach Bowen Sargent to address his team. He reminded them of the power of no expectations and that they could relax because the pressure was on the other teams, and they could just "play golf." They ended up closing the gap by seven shots and secured the tenth spot to advance to the championships.

In 1995, Ben Crenshaw won the Masters. What is remarkable is that he arrived at the Masters with his game in shambles, barely making cuts, and the Sunday prior he had lost his teacher and friend, Harvey Penick. He flew back to Austin, Texas for the funeral on Wednesday evening. "I don't know how I got through it," Crenshaw replied, "I still don't" (Richards, 2009).

Probably the most notable display in golf of having no expectations was the 2008 Open Championship. Padraig Harrington hurt his wrist so badly prior to playing that he only gave himself a 50% chance of actually finishing the tournament. In fact, he remarked that if he was not defending his title, he probably would not have played. "It was a great distraction for me," Harrington said. "It took a lot of pressure off me. It took a lot of stress off me. The fact that I didn't play three practice rounds like normal for a major was a big bonus. I was very fresh going into the weekend, and [these] 36 holes was a real battle" (Ferguson, 2008).

The role of expectations is evident in other sports. Prior to taking the mound on April 27th, 1994 for the Minnesota Twins, Scott Erickson had a rough warm-up and a tough first inning; “I didn't expect this when I took the field, the first two guys hit bullets. I thought this might be a long night.” However, Scott Erickson ended up throwing a no-hitter that night against the Milwaukee Brewers (Baseball-Almanac.com)

Jim Breech was an NFL kicker for the Cincinnati Bengals from 1980-1992. He holds the Bengals franchise record of 1,152 points and was in route to perhaps becoming Super bowl XXIII MVP by scoring 10 of the team's 16 points; however, Joe Montana changed those plans with a “isn't that John Candy” comment, and a 92-yard culminating drive. Jim Breech is a great golfer and having met him on the US PRO golf tour, he discussed his version of having no expectations. Before a road trip to Kansas City, his child jumped on his back and it immediately seized up. He was still experiencing spasms at the field on Sunday morning and was unsure how he was going to kick at all. Nevertheless, in the fickle world of a professional football kicker, he knew sitting out was not an option and he would have to perform. He attempted to just keep his back as straight as possible and stay over the ball as he kicked, and although awkward looking, it was the only way he could kick without pain. Due to his injury, he approached warm-ups and the game that day completely relaxed with no expectations. He ended up having the best warm-up of his life and was killing the ball during the game. Later on in his career if he was struggling, he would remind himself “sore back” which would serve as his cue to relax.

The dual roles of golf professional and professional golfer are difficult to navigate. One must maintain appropriate club responsibilities while attempting to maximize on the few chances of actually practicing and playing. This difficulty makes Chip Sullivan's accomplishments on the national level even more spectacular. Of note is that Chip Sullivan achieved all major

accomplishments (1996 Q-school, 2004 PGA championship finish, and 2008 PGA professional championship) while playing with no expectations.

During his 1996 attempt at q-school finals, he had recently married and his wife was expecting their first baby. He remarked that “it was the first time in my life that golf was not the most important thing in my life.” He finished fourth and secured his PGA tour card.

During his play in the 2004 PGA championship, Chip Sullivan finished 31st and became the first PGA professional since 1969 to finish under par. More remarkably was his life off the course. While his wife was expecting their third child (Colby), his sister Kerry was only given a few days to live from a fatal liver disease. "I just had to keep my emotions in check and focus on what I was doing," Sullivan said. "I had a lot of emotions flying out there, and I had to stay focused on what I was doing and just play golf" (Pump, B. 2004 PGA.com).

Perhaps most notable was his win at the 2007 PGA professional championship in Sunriver, Oregon while battling health issues. He experienced the condition called hemochromatosis, which is too much iron in the blood. As a result, due to a weakened state, he was unable to properly prepare. Typically a winner of any national event does not receive 28 pints of blood between January and March.

How could any of these people be expected to perform well? They were able to accomplish greatness in spite their circumstances because they had no expectations on the outcome. Having no expectations in turn essentially forced them to focus on aspects within their control. They got out of their own way!

Recall a time in your own game when you were sick, had outside life issues, were hurt, or had a broken or new club, and note how well you performed. These professional examples and our own testaments are the power of having no expectations. However, we know what we are

capable of and then naturally develop expectations. Having expectations is similar to an invisible ceiling - we know it's there and how to reach the ceiling, but only after we stop focusing on the outcome can we consistently play our best. Expectations do not help us perform better, and they take away from the task at hand. Expectations get in our way.

Tiger Woods often states that he expects to win every tournament. However, I really think he means that he has the confidence to win every tournament. The difference between confidence and having expectations is that expectations are quite simply out of our control, whereas confidence is within our control. The key is confidence in the aspects we can control. We mustn't only pay lip service either; we must believe and perfect the aspects of play that are within our own control. Former Angel, Rex Hudler, said that in baseball the only things he could control were how hard he hustled and being a good teammate. In the same way, we must commit to the mindset that in both practice and play, we can only control our *attitude, focus, pre & post-shot routine*.

Practice: No Expectations

"Do something every day for no other reason than you would rather not do it...so that during the hour of dire need, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test."- William James

UCLA Head Coach Derek Freeman orchestrated a remarkable 2008 campaign that peaked by winning the NCAA championship in the spring. His team began the 2008 fall season just where they left off; by winning every event UCLA played. His philosophy of coaching surrounds an exclusive emphasis on valuing every shot and allowing his players ultimate ownership of their game. Coach Freeman's players are essentially allowed "no excuses" for their play, whether the wind changed direction, or a bad bounce on a green. During qualifying he

removes the built in excuses. In doing so, qualifying is made more difficult than any player may actually face during play.

Coach Freeman sometimes has qualifying rounds by having his team play with irons only. Or if it is a match-play qualifying format, then the “hot” players have to compete without a driver for the round. They are forced to “deal” with being 40-50 yards behind most every hole. He sometimes has a rule that the players must miss the green on purpose or the playing partner gets to drop it in the most difficult spot off the green. Coach Freeman also has UCLA men’s golf qualify by missing the green long or they get assessed a stroke penalty.

Expectations stem from thinking about aspects out of our control. How can the UCLA golf team expect to shoot a certain score if they have to contend with missing every green? Coach Freeman removes any expectations before they play and takes any “edge” off of players getting in their own way. These unconventional drills are easily accessible and help build mental toughness.

Another format to learn playing with no expectations is to play with someone else’s clubs. Have a difficult putting drill ready and use someone else’s putter. If no one else is available, then use an old putter. To strengthen the power of this drill, *Play an entire round* with someone else’s putter. Take the drill further by switching clubs with a playing partner for the entire round. Chances are that it will not feel correct or comfortable, and it forces us to focus on the aspects we can control. Expectations are removed and we are forced to just “focus on the target.”